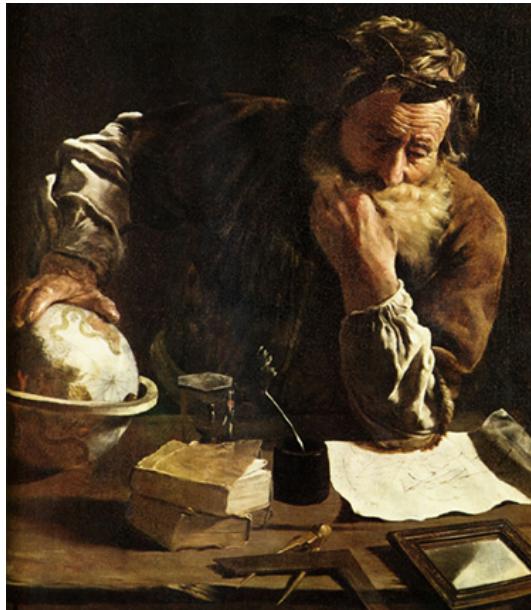


Landmarks in the History of Science

Great Scientific Discoveries from
a Global-Historical Perspective

Basil Evangelidis

Leiden University, Netherlands



Vernon Series on History of Science



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Front cover illustration: The “Archimedes” Portrait was painted about 1620 by Domenico Fetti in Mantua. It probably remained in Italy until 1743. Today the picture is located in the art museum Alte Meister in Dresden (Germany).

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*"My purpose is to set forth a new science dealing
with a very ancient subject"*

(Galileo, Dialogue Concerning Two Sciences, Third
Day)

Foreword

The scope of this book is a short journey through the last 2400 years of consciously recorded scientific practice. From the aspect of this considerably long period of time (from Ancient Greek, to Chinese and Islamic Science until the Age of the Discoveries and Modern Science and Technology), the greatest advancements in the world-history of science may be found not only in the theoretical field, such as with heliocentrism, atomism, relativity, but, more important, in the methodological transition to the experimental, mathematical, constructivist, instrumental practice of science.

The advancement of science, from antiquity to the renaissance, was significant in the domain of medicine, especially in the anatomy, the pathology and the hygiene, which may be ascribable mainly to the physicians and anatomists Thaddeus of Florence, Mondino de Liuzzi, Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, Andreas Vesalius, Realdo Colombo, the tradition of the works of Hippocrates and Galen, and that of Muslim scientists such as Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi. The ancient medicine, however, believed that the venous blood is generated in the liver, from where it was distributed and consumed by all organs of the body. Willian Harvey was the one who recognized the importance of the circulation of the blood, in his work *On the Motion of the Heart and Blood*. Harvey was also one of the first embryologists.

From the inner organs of the organisms to the outer regions of earth, renaissance science was ubiquitous. Significant discoveries were taking place in geography and cartography: The Norse voyages to Greenland and North America and the African travels of Masudi, Ibn Haukal, El-Bekri and Ibn Battuta had an inappreciable influence to Western Europe. A relatively larger impact had the journeys of John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, Nicolo, Maffeo and Marco Polo, in the thirteenth century, and the voyages of John of Monte Corvino, Odoric of Pordenone, Andrew of Perugia, Jordan of Severac, and John of Marignolli, in the early fourteenth century. Aside from the eyewitness or hearsay story of Masudi, who “believed the ‘green sea of darkness’ (the Atlantic) to be unnavigable, and the frigid and torrid zones of the earth to be uninhabitable” (Parry, 1963: 5), Jewish cartographers and instrument-makers working in Majorca in the later fourteenth century, especially Abraham Cresques, produced, by about 1375, the famous accurate Catalan

Atlas. He applied, for the first time, medieval hydrographical techniques to the world outside Europe, representing places such as Timbuktu and the rivers Senegal, Niger, and Nile.

The Iberian Peninsula was a meeting point and crossroad of mutual affection between Arab, Jewish and European culture. Alfonso X of Castile summoned into his court intellectuals of three religions, his works were translated into French and his astronomical tables were annotated by Copernicus. Spanish culture was also influenced by the Arabs, in the vocabulary, in architecture, in commerce, irrigation, the design and rig of ships, in the construction of saddlery and harness. The Arabs were found to possess the original manuscripts of Greek scientists, which they translated and commented. When the Christians conquered the library of Toledo, they found numerous writings, while some searching for Ptolemy's *Mathematical Syntaxis* or *Almagest*. The intellectuals knew about that work, where Claudius Ptolemy exposed the geocentric system (based on observations made with naked eye).

The Toledo School in Spain, directed firstly by Archbishop Raymond of Toledo, hosted a significant movement of translators, during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. The practice of translation extended also to other libraries in Spain and locally organized translation workshops. The translators were doctors who served in the courts of the rulers and knew Judeo-Arabic and Latin. They were Jewish, Italian, such as Gerard of Cremona, baptised Jews, as John of Seville and Dominicus Gundissalinus, of Latin or other origins, such as Michael Scot and Rudolf of Bruges. There are two families of works translated from Arabic translations: a) Works concerning practical knowledge related to everyday life: The medical works of Hippocrates and Galen, various projects of mathematics that have particular utility as geometric works, reflections on ratios, the fifth book of Euclid, various books of Euclid's *Elements*, astronomical and engineering works, such as for pumping water, manufacturing catapults etc. b) The other family was favoured by medieval scholars, works mainly of Plato and Aristotle. Later, the contact of the Europeans with Greek texts was stopped and some translations are incomplete.

By 1200 in Paris, Bologna, and Oxford the students were hundreds, and learned liberal arts, medicine, theology, law, while from 1377 to 1520 more than 200,000 students passed from German universities. The universities had three courses: a) The faculty of arts involved internally two cycles (corresponding to Bachelor and Mas-

ter). The student studied the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, astronomy, mathematics, physics). b) The second cycle was standardized, biennial and the teachers were many. The students learned mathematics, natural philosophy, astronomy, music, metaphysics, poetry, and ethics. c) The doctoral cycle offered theology, medicine, and law and it was extremely long. In Paris, there were four schools, a graduate school of liberal arts and three postgraduate (law, medicine, theology) (Rüegg, 1993).

Navigating and trading resources

The Spanish invasion in North Africa began with the capture of Melilla in 1492. The next year Columbus reported of islands in western Atlantic and insisted that they might be used as stepping-stones to China. Meanwhile the art of printing made possible a diffusion of navigational manuals and spread the news of discoveries, with bestsellers such as Peter Martyr's *De Orbe Novo*, Fracanzano da Montalbocco's *Paesi novamente ritrovati*, Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia universalis*, Theodor De Bry's *Grands Voyages*.

Seaborne trade was traditionally organized by merchant guilds, craft guilds, regulated companies, as a type of commenda, societas, and compagnia. A fifteenth-century merchant ship might take up to two months to make the passage from Barcelona to Alexandria; perhaps two or three weeks from Messina to Tripoli; ten or twelve days from Genoa to Tunis. In the fifteenth century, the small Atlantic ships of Basque, Galician or Portuguese origin, invaded in the Mediterranean. The economic activity of the region was concentrated in Milan, the center of metallurgical industry, Florence, the main textile and banking center, Genoa and Venice, the centers of Eastern luxury trade to western and northern Europe. The Genoese capital associations *compere* and *maone* had a corporative character. Constantinople and Cairo were immense urban and consuming centers. Florence, Genoa, Venice, Ragusa, Naples, the western Mediterranean as a whole was rarely self-sufficient and depended upon sea-borne trade in grain, salt, food preserved in salt, oil, wine, cheese, raisins, currants, almonds, and oranges.

Towards the end of the century, however, exports of oil from Andalusia began to be directed to the Canaries, and later to the West Indies, where it commanded very high prices. The Mediterranean wine trade -since viti-

culture was spread throughout the region- could not compare with the great fleets which left the Gironde, and later the Guadalquivir, for Atlantic destinations (Parry, 1963: p. 39).

The far eastern trade was controlled by Chinese, who delivered spices in the important Malayan port of Malacca. From there, together with the cinnamon of Ceylon and the pepper of India, the spices were sold in the *spice ports* of the Malabar Coast and Gujarat. From Malabar, Arabian teak-built ocean-going baghlas followed two alternative routes from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, and two principal ports of transshipment: Aden to the Red Sea and Ormuz through the Persian Gulf.

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